TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission

March 15, 2016 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Woodbury Rouse opened up the meeting @ 6:04pm.
Present for this meeting were:
Planning Commission Board Members; Woodbury Rouse; Bruce Ryan; Larry Simmons; Barbara Chevalier; *absent – Luc Dupuis*
Town of Highgate staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning & Zoning Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Clerk
Public / Other: Amanda Holland – NRPC; Paulette Tatro – Highgate Selectboard Member

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Woodbury Rouse to approve the minutes from *February 16, 2016* as amended. The motion was seconded by Larry Simmons – **APPROVED.**

III. **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

At town meeting on March 1st Henry Rainville made a motion to cut the CIP by $400,000.00 down to $41,999.00. That $41,999.00 was allocated to be used for the fire department ($5,000.00 towards personal protective gear and the balance towards a new fire truck). Voters were not just upset about the CIP, there was a range of other issues going on at town meeting involving personnel changes, truck purchases and the Jedware property. The conversation became futile at a certain point and the CIP took the brunt of it. Luc Dupuis was the only member of the PC who was at town meeting, and he kept a low profile. No questions were even asked about the general fund or any other parts of the budget, it was passed without any question or ability for departments to speak or answer questions. Barb asked about the Jedware property, and Heidi gave some background on the issues there and how we ended up with the property as part of a bankruptcy settlement in the state of Florida. The question before the PC now is, where do we go from here? Even if the CIP had passed as presented, our anticipated municipal tax rate would have been lower than both Swanton and Sheldon's proposed municipal rates. Brian Rowell and Henry Rainville had both been invited to participate in the process. Both came forward very late and had lots of questions. Multiple people have come forward since town meeting day to tell us that they believe in the CIP and the reason for it, but they did not feel comfortable speaking up at town meeting. People felt intimidated at town meeting, which is unfortunate on all levels. Larry feels that if we have another community forum and separate the CIP from all the other issues we could have some meaningful discussion on the topic, mitigate fears and get a sense of what people are looking for. Getting key folks involved that were opposed to the CIP at town meeting will be important. Different avenues to get the word out and get more people involved were discussed. Every public hearing we had on the CIP was poorly attended with the exception of the one in October that was held with the solar meeting over at the school. That had a good audience, but people just weren't tuned in until the books were printed and they saw the numbers. Now that people are aware, hopefully we will have a much bigger crowd and increased participation in the process, which was our intent all along. It was decided that a mass mailing will go out with tax bills on or around August 19th with regard to another community forum on the CIP. This will take place on Tuesday, September 20th @ 6pm. Heidi would like to tie in the ADA grant and make it more of an open house at the municipal building so the community can have an opportunity to see the complex, the vehicles, and the needs that will be addressed through the ADA study and CIP. Drawing such a big crowd, we will have to host the

meeting in either the fire department or in the town garage in the bays. It was discussed that we could fire up the grills and feed those who attend as well. If people feel comfortable and less intimidated they will be far more likely to speak up and participate. With good advertising and the community now aware of the CIP turn out should be good, and we hope that it is. We should be able to reach most, if not all, people using the mailing in August, the newspaper, FaceBook, website, community events board (which should be digital by then), flyers in stores, air time on NW Access TV through Selectboard meetings, and other town events where people gather like the concerts in the park in July and August. All these can be used to spread the word and promote participation in this very important process of putting together a CIP and understanding the ADA study and requirements at the municipal building. NRPC can also assist us with putting this together for September 20th. Shelley will have to get with department heads earlier than projected and the PC would like to see the department heads at the PC meeting in July with their priorities and reasons to back them up. That should give enough time to prepare for September, and from there enough time before budgeting season starts again.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- **Airport update** – Heidi said this is moving forward, and the landowner is meeting with the PSB. ACT250 will also be involved as they continue to pursue development at the airport. Larry had some questions about storm water and permitting, all of this is through the state.
- **Map overlay** - Amanda asked about the Monument Road area and the Native American District overlay map. There was some discussion on what should and should not be included in the map. There is a wildlife refuge and some agricultural land at the end that was mentioned. Amanda will have Emily at NRPC put together a map for the PC to review in April.
- **Appointments to the Planning Commission** – The Selectboard will be looking at appointments or reappointments to the PC as well as other boards and positions. Some interest was generated at town meeting this year, as some people were excited and / or flustered by the outcome. It is becoming more and more clear that the town needs active planners to carry projects forward, attend town meetings and advocate on behalf of the town from a planners perspective. Any future involvement will require a higher level of participation than it has in the past.
- **Grant opportunities** – Heidi attended the Northern Borders workshop. Grants funds are available for anything that is going to stimulate economic development through tourism, recreation and public facilities. This is a $250,000.00 grant which is a 50/50 match. For example, to relocate the public library, we would like to look at a piece of property and potentially turn it into a multi-use building, however, we can't negotiate anything until we have funds, and with the CIP being so drastically cut, we are in sort of a "catch 22".
- **Open Selectboard seat** – Zeb Maskell had a successful write in campaign, which he was probably not even aware of at the time. Zeb has respectfully declined the Selectboard seat due to time constraints. The board is accepting letters of interest until March 24th. Heidi can also follow up on leads if anyone has any ideas. Town meeting likely scared some that would have otherwise been interested.
- **Update on health order** – the court ordered inspection on Lamkin Street took place a few weeks ago. Based on those findings, we are hoping the judge will give the town some relief and condemn the home. Heidi gave some info on the lengthy history of this case, going back to 2014 with the courts. Paulette asked how it would play out going forward. Heidi said it should all be spelled out for us by the court with their ruling.
- **Misc** – Heidi was contacted by the state regarding subdivisions off of a state highway (Route 78, Route 7, Route 207). They would like to be involved and provide input, so this should be included in the next bylaw re-write. She gave a recent example of the Lussier 2-lot subdivision off Route 78.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 7:48pm. The motion was seconded by Woodbury Rouse – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Clerk 5/17/16
Wendi Dusablon Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, PC – Chair 5-17-16
Woodbury Rouse, Jr. Date